

N^o 2

*Divine Alarms and Warnings to a sinful
People considered and improved:*

A
S E R M O N

Preached at
Barnstaple, in the County of Devon,
O N

F E B R U A R Y 6. 1756.

B E I N G

The Day appointed for a General Fasting
and Humiliation, on account of the late
dreadful EARTHQUAKES in divers Places;
and to implore a divine Blessing and Success
on our Counsels and Arms against our
Enemies.

By JOSEPH BALLER. *R*

- *Hear ye the Rod, and who hath appointed it.* Micah
vi. 9.
— *Sin no more, lest a worse thing come unto thee.* John
v. 14.
-
- A*
-

L O N D O N:

Printed for EDWARD DILLY at the *Rose and Crown*
in the *Poultry* near the *Mansion-House*.

M DCC LVI.

[Price Six Pence.]

✕✕

P

T

ration
of the
ance
Soul
they
by the
in the
Vice
possib
are i
sure,
us,
tion.

T

comm
many
fitabl
Auth
at the
seem t





T H E

P R E F A C E.

THE ensuing Discourse is presented to the Public for their serious perusal and consideration, in order to awaken secure sinners to a sense of their Sin and Danger, that by a timely Repentance and Reformation, they may deliver their own Souls from those temporal and eternal Evils to which they are liable: And that the Godly may be excited by their fervent Prayers and earnest Endeavours in their several places and stations, to discourage Vice and Infidelity, and to advance as much as possible the cause of Religion and Virtue: which are the only Means to avert the Divine Displeasure, and those Judgments of God which hang over us, and threaten the destruction of a sinful Nation.

The important truths here touch'd upon are of common concern: and as they were approved by many, and (it is to be hoped) were spiritually profitable to some that heard them delivered, so the Author apprehends that they may be of general use at this particular Season, when the Spirits of Men seem to be awed and alarmed by those tremendous Visi-

tations that have fallen so heavy upon others; and which we ourselves have such just reason to fear. These Considerations have prevailed with him to appear in public, though sensible of his own Infirmities; and that what drops from his Pen is destitute of those striking Beauties, that fine Polish and high Finishing, that adorns the Performances of many others: nevertheless, a desire of extensive Usefulness, and if possible to contribute something (though but a Mite) to the Good of his dear Country, has induced him to risk the Censure of the Critic, and the Contempt of those who despise all Performances of this Kind.

Reader, If any thing here offered, affects thy Conscience, and proves advantageous to thy Soul, and its spiritual Interest, give God the Glory; and pray for the unworthy Author; who sincerely wisheth thy spiritual and eternal Welfare.





AMOS iii. 6.

*Shall a Trumpet be blown in the City,
and the People not be afraid? Shall
there be Evil in a City, and the
Lord hath not done it?*



IN the two former Chapters the Prophet denounceth the Judgments of God against Syria, Moab, the Philistines, Children of Ammon, and other neighbouring Nations to Israel, for their many Idolatries and other abounding Abominations; and then more largely and particularly addresseth himself to the People of Judah and Israel; endeavours to set before them their Transgressions, and threatens them also with the most heavy Doom, if they still persisted in their Provocations and Rebellions. Israel had many Examples of the divine Severity against Sinners; had heard many of the awful Threatnings of God denounced against themselves by former Prophets; and had had frequent and
signal

signal Warnings of approaching Judgments; but they grew careless and secure, were settled on their Lees, and had little or no Apprehensions of their imminent Danger: Therefore the Lord in infinite Compassion and Mercy, as loth to destroy, and wholly give them up to utter Desolation and Ruin, is pleased to raise up and send this his Prophet, once more to give them Warning, in order to their Repentance and Escape.

The Calamities of others were like to have but little Effect upon them, because they were externally the chosen and the professing People of God; therefore, (to take them off from all vain Hopes, and groundless Dependencies on these things) he lets them know, That their outward Privileges and visible Profession would be no Security against the Strokes of Divine Justice, if their Temper and Conduct were unsuitable, and contradictory to these their peculiar Benefits and Advantages; if while they pretended to know God, they did in Works deny him; being abominable, disobedient, and to every good Work reprobate. Sins against Light, and under a Plenty of the Means of Grace, are of a deeper dye, and more heinously aggravated than the Sins of others; and therefore instead of Impunity, such Persons pull down upon themselves a much sorer Punishment, and heavier Condemnation. Hence says God by the Prophet, in the second Verse of this Chapter, *You only have I known of all the Families*

families of the Earth, therefore you will I punish; i. e. with the most severe Judgments for all your Transgressions. This was a most solemn and awful Warning, and none but the most stupid and insensible surely could remain under it unmoved and unconcerned. For, *Shall a Trumpet be blown in the City, and the People not be afraid? Shall there be Evil in a City, and the Lord hath not done it?* When God lifts up his Hand in a way of Judgment, who will not take the Alarm; and seek a Refuge from impending Wrath?

The Words of our Text though in the Form of an Interrogation or Question, are to be understood as a very strong or vehement Assertion or Affirmation; and they very evidently contain or consist of two principal Parts, viz.

I. That the apprehended approach or appearance of Danger, Distress or Calamity doth naturally fill Men with Dread and Terror; and put them upon an earnest seeking or looking out after a place of Refuge, and the means of Deliverance. *Shall a Trumpet be blown in the City, and the People not be afraid?*

II. That from whatever Quarter Evil, *i. e.* Affliction may come, or whatsoever may be the Means, Agents, or Instruments in it, and that not only in private and personal, but also in national and public Calamities, still, we ought to look upon them all as coming from God; and should eye the Hand of Providence in them,

them, as permitting, ordering, and disposing them also as will best answer the wise and sovereign Ends of the divine Government. The Instruments may be various, but the original Cause of all Events is but one, viz. The sovereign Will and Pleasure of him who worketh all Things after the Counsel of his own Will.

These two Observations comprise or contain in them the whole Design or Meaning of the Prophet in our Text; which is very congruous and well adapted to answer his principal Scope or Design, which was to rouse the People of Israel out of their Indolence and Security; to convince them of their Danger by reason of their abounding Wickedness; and to forewarn them of approaching Judgments, if peradventure by a timely Repentance and Reformation they might obtain an Escape. And very like to theirs are our present Circumstances and Situation: Our Sins surely have greatly abounded: God is now sounding an Alarm to us, (that we may consider, and bethink ourselves 'ere it be too late) in the very awful Dispensations of his Providence in many neighbouring Countries; and more especially in the Kingdom of Portugal, (as you have all heard) where many flourishing Towns and Cities, and more especially Lisbon, the stately and opulent Metropolis of that wealthy Kingdom, has in a few Minutes been reduced from all its Grandeur and Magnificence into a meer Heap of Rubbish, and buried many Thousands

sands of its Inhabitants under its Ruins. And this desolating Calamity has not been confin'd to that Country, but the Earth (as unable to bear the Wickedness of its Inhabitants) hath been terribly convuls'd, and shaken, through many different Regions and Kingdoms: The Shocks have been often repeated, and most of them attended with many fatal and dreadful Consequences. In some Places, (and especially the southern Side of the Mediterranean Sea) the Earth has dreadfully clove in sunder, and in a Moment swallowed up many Hundreds, with their Houses, and all that they had. And what is still more alarming, is the vast Extent of this awful Dispensation: For by the most authentic Accounts, the Effects of it have been perceived from the Island called Iceland, which lies in about 65 Degrees North Latitude, almost to the Tropic of Cancer; which is almost three Thousand Miles; and from some Parts of Morocco, where its Effects were very terrible, it extended itself westward through the vast Atlantic Ocean quite to the eastern Parts of North America; which is at least upwards of four Thousand Miles. Now if we do but consider, the different Courses which those Streams of Fire or sulphurous Vapours (which, confined in the Bowels of the Earth, occasioned those horrid Convulsions) I say, if we consider the Courses those Streams took, 'ere they got Vent, it

is truly wonderful, and almost miraculous, that we in this part of the World should escape this fore Visitation. Let us therefore eye herein the special Hand of Providence; and believe, that though this and other Events are effected by the Instrumentality of Second Causes, yet that they are all under the Divine Direction and Disposal; and let us hear and fear, and do no more so wickedly as formerly; and when God's Judgments are abroad in the Earth, let us learn Righteousness, lest Wrath and utter Desolation overtake us: For, *Shall a Trumpet be blown in the City, and the People not be afraid? Shall there, can there, be Evil in a City, and the Lord hath not done it?* The Lord grant that we in these Kingdoms may consider these awful Warnings of Providence: May we all truly humble ourselves this Day before the Lord; and may he hear our united Cries and Supplications for Mercy; that so we may yet escape desolating Judgments; and may both our Councils, and Arms be bless'd to the utter defeating the Schemes and Projects of our Enemies against us. God, you see, is giving us most awful Warnings, let us take the Alarm, and in time reform and amend.

For the improvement of our Meditations on this Passage of Sacred Writ as suitable to the present solemn Occasion, I shall (God assisting)

In

In the first Place, shew you, That we ought to look upon every Evil of Affliction, whether of a public or private nature, as coming from the Hand of God.

Secondly, I shall point out to you some of the most usual Signs or Presages of approaching Judgments.

Thirdly, I shall shew you, what Effects these divine Warnings ought to have upon us.

And lastly, I shall conclude with a brief and suitable Application to our own selves in particular.

First, we ought to look upon every evil of Affliction, and that whether public or private, national or personal, as coming from the Hand of God. Very few (if any) who have acknowledged the existence of a supreme Being, have been able to deny, or so much as to doubt of the Doctrine of Divine Providence: For, if there is an all-wise, great and almighty Being that gave existence to all things, and if he upholds and preserves all things by the Word of his Power, he certainly superintends and governs the Works of his own Hands. By right of Creation he is undoubtedly their absolute Proprietor, and Owner; therefore, he may, and doth, order and dispose of all, according to his sovereign Will and Pleasure: But this his Dominion and Government is always executed in such

a way, as best tends to the advancement, and display of the Honour and Glory of his infinite Perfections: For the Lord is righteous in all his Ways, and holy in all his Works. Hence, as in innumerable instances he manifesteth the riches and freeness of his Grace and Mercy to the miserable and unworthy, so in a most tremendous manner he often reveals his Wrath from Heaven against the unrighteousness and ungodliness of men: If any then will be so daring and impious, as to persist in their Rebellions, and Breaches of his Law, they shall in the event most surely find, and be made to feel, that it is indeed an evil and a bitter thing to sin against the Lord. Let the ignorant, the inconsiderate, and the profane Infidel then ascribe their Crosses, Losses, and Troubles, only to the fortuitous events of blind Chance, or to the concurrent agency of Second Causes, yet certainly every wise and rational (to be sure every good, Man) will look higher for their Original; will look off from the Rod, to the Hand that strikes; will be solicitous to know wherefore God contends with him; and to learn those Lessons and Instructions, that God thereby designs to inculcate and enforce. The Psalmist tells us, That the Lord is known by the Judgments that he executes^a; *i. e.* in the present Life. God displays the glory of his Holiness, Power, and Jus-

^a Psal. ix. 16.

Justice, in the present Troubles and Sorrows of the Wicked: He reserves indeed the more full and complete glorifying these his Attributes to a future and an everlasting World; nevertheless as he has fenced his Laws around with solemn Threatnings, so Sinners shall be made even now to feel, that these are not wholly in vain. But more especially Nations and Bodies Politic, which, as such, subsist only in this World, (and consequently are only capable of Rewards, and Punishments in this Life,) these, if they become universally degenerate and corrupt, may justly fear, and shall in the end be certainly made remarkable monuments of God's Wrath and Vengeance. Therefore, though the Providence of God may not always so conspicuously in this Life distinguish as to Individuals, between the Righteous and the Wicked, for many wise Reasons, and because of an after-state of Recompence; yet it is generally otherwise with respect to Nations and Kingdoms: Providence will manifest itself in favour of a righteous and godly People; but Justice will pursue, severely punish, and finally overthrow the wicked. Thus you see, that as moral Evil, the Evil of Sin, is only from ourselves, so penal Evil, the Evil of Affliction, is to be ascribed only to him who saith of himself ^b *I kill, and I make alive, I wound, and I heal, neither is there any that*
can

^b Deut. xxxii. 39.

can deliver out of my Hand. And again, ' I form the Light, and create Darknefs. I make Peace, and create Evil: I the Lord do all these things. Things then are not suffer'd to run at random; nothing that comes to pass happens by meer Chance, but must all be ascribed to him, either to his Agency, or Permission: as therefore, on the one hand, all our Comforts, our Success, and Prosperity, should lead us to Thankfulness, Love, and Obedience to him, from the Overflowings of whose Bounty and Goodness all our Mercies spring; so, on the other, we ought to submit to, be humbled under, and learn to repent, and reform, from the smart Strokes and Rebukes of his chastiseing Rod: but if Judgments have not this Effect, let Sinners know, that God hath a multitude of Arrows in his Quiver; as he hath unsearchable riches of Grace in Christ for his People, so he hath large stores of Wrath in reserve for his Enemies, and an infinite variety of Plagues to inflict upon them; and if once he is so provoked, as to stir up all his Wrath, he will pour it forth like Fire, and it shall burn, so as none shall be able to quench it. You see then, to what to ascribe all our publick Calamities, *viz.* to God as the just and righteous Governor of the World; but to our own Depravity and Wickedness as the meritorious and procuring Cause.

^c Isaiah xlv. 7.

O what

O what reason then have we in these Nations to humble and abase ourselves in the sight of God! and to tremble before him, whose Vengeance we have justly provoked, by our Infidelity, and Immorality, our abuse of Gospel-light, and unfruitfulness under the greatest plenty of spiritual Advantages and the means of Grace, by our Drunkenness, and Lewdness, our Sabbath-breaking, and Profaneness, and numberless other Wickednesses and Abominations, visible almost in every corner of our Land! We surely have been a People highly favoured of the Lord; and God may say of us, as of Israel, his Vineyard of old, because of our unfruitfulness, ^a *What could have been done more to my Vineyard, that I have not done in it? wherefore when I looked that it should bring forth Grapes, brought it forth wild Grapes?* Surely then, God may well have a controversy with us, and consume us, or cut us off from being a Nation. God has often lifted up his Rod over us, to shew us, how easily he could smite us; and to awaken us to a sight of our sinfulness, and sense of our Duty; and now more particularly is he calling upon us, and speaking to us, by the awful voice of his Judgments in many neighbouring parts of the World; and in permitting our restless and ambitious Neighbours to interrupt our publick Peace and Tranquility. They

^a Isaiah v. 4.

seem

seem like the Assyrian of old, to be reserved as the Rod of God's Anger; * to be the Instruments of Punishment to others: and now, (as often heretofore) the Lord is again threatening to chastise us with this scourge: they have boasted greatly of their mighty Equipments and Preparations; and as they delight much in great swelling Words of Vanity, so they have not been wanting in severe and cruel Menaces: but hitherto (blessed be God) he has restrained their Rage and Malice against us: so that like the proud Waves, though they rore, and furiously toss themselves, yet have they not been permitted to break out, and overwhelm us. This may serve to shew us, that God is as yet loth to destroy us: and therefore he is pleased to give us these awful Warnings: O let us take the Alarm: let us see the hand of God lifted up: let us beware of going on in our Rebellions against, and daring Defiances of his sovereign Authority; lest we fill up the full measure of our Iniquities, and so wrath come upon us to the uttermost. However, God doth not usually at once give up a sinful People or Nation, and bring upon them overwhelming Judgments or Calamities: he generally gives them many solemn and awful Forewarnings, that by a timely Repentance they may escape and avert the impending Blow.

* Isaiah x. 5.

God

God is not willing that any should perish; he desireth not the Death of the Wicked; but tries a variety of methods with them, to reclaim them, and bring them to a serious consideration of their Ways: And whenever he takes the Rod into his hand, it is with reluctance, and a seeming backwardness: He is ready to pardon, and forgive, but loath to destroy, and exert the Fury of his Wrath: Therefore, before he wholly gives up a People to Desolation and Ruin, he affords them many Warnings; gives them a convenient space for Repentance, and doth not totally abandon them, 'till after they appear quite irreclaimable and incorrigible.

This leads me to the next general Head, which was,

2^{dly}. To point out to you some of the usual Signs or Presages of approaching Judgments, in order to rouse, and awaken us out of our present Lethargy and Security.

And here the first that I shall mention, is a more than ordinary spread and abounding of Iniquity.

'Tis Sin (my Friends) is the great makebate between Heaven and Earth: This is that accursed Thing which God's Soul hates: And as it sets the Creature in a State of opposition and hostility to the blessed God; so it arms the divine Power; puts a sword into the hand of divine Justice;

tice; and renders that God who is all Gentleness and Love (the Father of Mercies and God of all Consolation) a consuming Fire to Sinners: And the more Sin abounds, the more is his Wrath and Vengeance stir'd up, and inflam'd. From his Propensity to Mercy he endures with much long-suffering the Rebellions and Provocations of sinners; and waits that he may be gracious unto them: but he hath declared, That his spirit shall not always strive with men. There are certain Bounds and Limits, beyond which his Patience will not continue; and therefore if men still persist, adding Sin to Sin, 'till they have exercis'd it to it's utmost length, then Ruin and everlasting Desolation shall most surely overtake them. And thus God deals with Nations and Kingdoms, as well as with particular Persons; and therefore this should be an alarming Consideration to us in these Lands, seeing Iniquity doth so much abound among us, and the divine Forbearance hath been so far lengthen'd out towards us, How long did God bear with the old World? but at last, when all Flesh had corrupted their way, then God swept them away by the universal Deluge: God spared the Canaanites, 'till their Iniquity was full, and then they were all devoted to Destruction: And so God dealt with his

own

own people Israel, who went on in their Rebellions, trying and trespassing on the divine Patience, till at last the wrath of the Lord arose against them, and there was no Remedy. Hence then, the more Sin abounds among a People, the nearer certainly are they to Destruction. O may this prove to us all this Day an awakening and humbling Conderation

2^{dly}. The despising and abusing of gospel-light and the Means of Grace will certainly hasten divine Judgments, and draw down the Vengeance of God on a sinful People : and where this Sin is carried on to any considerable length, such a Nation cannot be far from Ruin. And O ! what reason have we to fear ! How much has England to answer for on this account ? For what Nation under the whole cope of heaven hath enjoyed the like Privileges and Advantages with ourselves ? But, who hath abused them more ? Or, who can be more barren and unfruitful ? We have been planted on a very fruitful Hill ; and have been constantly watered with the Dew of Heaven : our Enemies of Rome have indeed been unwearied in their Endeavours and Attempts to blow out, and extinguish that light of the Gospel among us, which clearly discovers the folly and wickedness of their

innumerable Superstitions and Idolatries ; but hitherto the Lord hath fenced and guarded us around ; hath been as a wall of fire to preserve to us both our religious and civil Liberties : but O how poor have been our Returns of Love and Obedience to our gracious Benefactor and Preserver ! What a long, clear, and warm day of Grace have we been favoured with ! What a vast number of faithful Messengers hath God raised up, and sent amongst us ; but alas ! how many of them have been abused, persecuted, or put to silence ! How generally has their sacred Character been scoffed at, and derided ; and how little regarded have been all their solemn Calls, and Warnings, their serious Counsels and Admonitions ? May we not then well hear that tremendous Sentence, which our Lord pronounced on the barren Fig-tree, *No fruit grow on Thee henceforth, and for-ever ?* May we not well hear, that God will say of us, *Cut them down, why cumber they the Ground ?* If men's Account at last must be according to the Talents they have received, how shall we be able to answer ? *How can we escape, who have despised and neglected so great Salvation ?* * *Wo unto thee Chorazin, Wo unto thee Bethsaida ;* saith our Lord, *for if the mighty Works which have been done in thee, had been done*
in

* Mat. xi. 21, 22.

in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in Sackcloth and Ashes; but I say unto you it shall be more tolerable in the day of Judgment for Tyre and Sidon than for you. And thus God favoured Jerusalem beyond all other Cities with Prophets and other extraordinary Messengers, to instruct her in the right Way of faith and holiness; and at last she enjoyed the Privilege of Christ's own personal Ministry; but she despised and rejected the Counsel of God against herself, and at last with wicked hands delivered up, and crucified the Lord of Glory; for which God rejected her, cast her off, and gave her up to utter Desolation, according to our Lord's doleful Lamentation and Prediction, ^b *O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the Prophets, and stonest them that are sent unto thee; how often would I have gathered thy Children together, even as a Hen gathereth her Brood under her Wings, but ye would not! wherefore behold your house is left unto you, desolate.*

Farther, 3^{dly}. Another melancholy Pre-
 sage of approaching Judgments is, God's removal of many of his People to Heaven; so that few (if any are left, to fight against, and oppose the growth and abounding of Iniquity.

This was the Case of rebellious Israel of old, who were carried Captive soon after the

^b Mat. xxiii. 37, 38.

the Death of good Josiah : and immediately upon the Departure of Lot out of wicked Sodom, the Lord destroyed them by Fire and Brimstone from Heaven. Good men (as the Prophet says) *are the Chariots of Israel, and the Horsemen thereof* : They are (whatsoever others may think of them) the main Props and Bulwark of a Nation; and it is likely, that it is much upon their account, and in answer to their Prayers and Tears that God bears so long as he doth with a profane and ungodly World. Now when these are generally slighted and despised : (or as the Prophet says) when the Righteous perisheth, and no Man layeth it to heart, and when merciful men are taken away, and none regardeth or considereth that the Righteous are taken away from the Evil to come, it is a sad Sign of an abandoned People, a People devoted and near to Destruction. This indeed I cannot so directly apply to ourselves : however, this Consideration should cause us more highly to value and esteem the Godly, and sincerely to lament the smallness of their Number.

4^{thly}. Every instance of God's Severity to others, should be an Alarm to us, to consider our own Deserts, and to fear lest the same, or worst Calamities should overtake us. *When God's Judgments are abroad in the Earth, the Inhabitants thereof should*
learn

learn
a v
fear
Dis
read
wha
visit
escap
noce
into
and
same
is ag
whic
him
mingi
says
to an
these
Galile
I tell
all lik
whom
them :
men th
but ex
rish.
others,
overtak

learn Righteousness. Let us not then from a vain and proud Curiosity be inclined to search into the secret reasons of the divine Dispensations with respect to others; or be ready to enquire or determine why, or for what particular Sins, God doth thus forely visit them; neither let us imagine that our escape is to be attributed either to our Innocency or Uprightness: rather let us search into our own Sins; be humbled for them; and carefully turn from them; lest the same, or a worse thing overtake us; this is agreeable to that Counsel and Caution which our Lord gives, *“ When some spake to him of the Galileans, whose Blood Pilate had mingled with their Sacrifices: upon this, says he, (knowing what thoughts were apt to arise in their hearts,) suppose ye that these Galileans were Sinners above all the Galileans, because they suffered such Things; I tell you nay; but except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish. Or those Eighteen upon whom the Tower in Siloam fell, and slew them: think ye they were Sinners above all men that dwelt at Jerusalem? I tell you nay: but except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish. Thus instead of judging hardly of others, because God suffers Calamities to overtake them; we should rather admire the*

the divine Mercy in sparing us; we should take warning, and repent, lest the same or a worse thing come unto us.

5^{thly}. Very frequently God first visits a sinful People with lesser Judgments; and if these have no good Effect, then he proceeds to greater. He does not come to Extremities all at once: For as his Word assures us, he is slow to Anger, but ready to pardon and forgive: Judgment is called his strange act; but Mercy seems to be his darling and most triumphant Attribute: Therefore he bears long with Sinners; tries the various methods of his Mercy, to win upon and melt the obdurate Hearts; and when these will not prevail, then he takes his Rod, and tries what severity will do; and when this proves ineffectual, Sinners have just reason to fear that these lighter Strokes will be followed with much sorer Punishments; this is agreeable to the way God threatens to deal with Israel, if they should dare to break his Covenant, and violate his Precepts, as you may read at large in Lev. xxvi. from the 14th verse of that Chapter.

And now (my Friends) let us reflect a little upon the divine Conduct towards us as a People. Has it not been just after this Method? What Peace and Plenty have we enjoy'd? How long has the public Health of the Nation been preserv'd, beyond the experience

exp
wil
oth
joye
sent
And
us;
vain
our
fore
Rod
sarie
our
Dest
Alar
to th
fly u
For
ready
go o
surel
Judg
us.
sever
ing J
cerna
preser
like t
and a
Th
shew

experience of former Ages ; as our Histories will inform us ? What a vast variety of other Blessings and Privileges have we enjoyed, under the auspicious reign of his present Majesty, and that of his royal Father ? And yet all this Kindness has not won upon us ; but we have rather waxed wanton, vain, and secure, and have forgotten God our Benefactor : Therefore he hath heretofore, and is now again trying what the Rod will do, by permitting our Adversaries to rise up against us, to interrupt our public Tranquility, and threaten our Destruction. Thus God is founding an Alarm to us : O let us now hear it, and to the warning : let us forsake our Sins, and fly unto him, for Deliverance and Safety : For he is merciful and gracious, he is ever ready to pardon and forgive, but if we still go on in our Sins and Impenitency, he will surely pursue us with still greater and greater Judgments, until he hath utterly consumed us. And thus I have pointed out to you several of the usual Presages of approaching Judgments, and how far they are discernable amongst us, or in our own case, and present circumstances ; and which therefore, like the sound of the Trumpet, should alarm and awaken us.

This brings me, in the third Place, to shew you what Effects these awful Warn-

D

ings

ings and Presages of approaching Judgments ought to have upon us.

And 1st. Surely the least Effect that these divine and awful Warnings should have, should be to rouse and awaken us to a serious Thoughtfulness and Consideration; as to our Sins, and our imminent Danger on the account of them; and how, or by what means and method we may escape those Evils that we have just cause to fear are coming upon us. Nothing so much hardens men in their Vices, and seals them down in their Impenitency, as a stupid covetousness and thoughtless security. Conscience indeed will sometimes disturb the very worst of men, and sharply remonstrate against their abominable Practices. But alas! they often find out ways to silence its Clamours; or else they wilfully shut their eyes against all Convictions, and obstinately resolve to go on and persist in their evil courses, thoughtless of all Events: God therefore loudly calls upon them by the voice of his Judgments, to awaken them to serious Reflection as the most likely means to a thorough Reformation. When I thought on my Ways (said the pious Psalmist) I turned my Feet unto thy Testimonies; then I made haste, and delayed not to keep thy Commandments.

Hence,

H
ful
to b
one
Rebu
not a
dren
will
the l
their
tance
fect,
and
Thus
and
Wrat
instan
and
to pu
tion
from
Evil
3^{dl}
us an
ens u
Depen
may l
of ear
our C
of Fl

Hence, 2^{dly}. God intends by these awful Warnings of approaching Judgments to bring finners to Repentance. This is one of God's principal Designs in all the Rebukes of his Providence; for he doth not afflict willingly, nor grieve the children of men: *i. e.* for his mere arbitrary will and pleasure; but whenever he takes the Rod, it is to bring them to a sense of their Duty, and to drive them to Repentance: And when it has this genuine Effect, he will be favourable, and gracious, and remove the Tokens of his Displeasure. Thus we may secure God on our side; and avert the strokes of his impending Wrath: For says God himself, ^a *At what instant I shall speak concerning a Nation, and concerning a Kingdom, to pluck up, and to pull down, and to destroy it: if that Nation against whom I have pronounced, turn from their evil ways, I will repent of the Evil that I thought to do unto them.*

3^{dly}. When God is pleased to inflict upon us any Tokens of his Displeasure, or threatens us with Judgments, it is to call off our Dependance on the Creature; and that we may hear and trust only in him. In a state of ease and prosperity we are apt to forget our God; and to put our Trust in an Arm of Flesh, but by these he beats us off from

^a Jer. xviii. 7, 8.

all our false Dependencies ; and shews us, that in him alone is bound up all our Safety and Felicity.

4^{thly}. When under the Rebukes of Providence, or apprehensive of approaching Evils, we should carefully search and examine ourselves ; and be solicitous to know wherefore it is that God contendeth with us. For unless we know the true reason why the Lord hath a Controversy with us, how shall we be able to rectify what is amiss, in order to avert the Tokens of his Displeasure, or to regain an interest in his Favour.

5^{thly}. When under the apprehension of approaching Calamities we should be humbled, as sensible of our own Deserts ; and be ready to acknowledge the Justice and Righteousness of God in all, even his severest Dispensations.

6^{thly}. This should teach us Patience under, and Resignation and Submission to the Divine Will ; as knowing that he is able to bring about Good out of the greatest Evil ; and that how severely soever he deals with us, yet we are punished less than our Iniquities deserve.

Lastly. When under any Tokens of the Divine Displeasure, or apprehensive of approaching Calamities, we should fly unto God, by Prayer, and Fasting, earnestly imploring his Help and Defence. And for
your

your Encouragement herein you have many Examples recorded in Scripture of the happy Effect of this method of proceeding. Thus God regarded even the outward Humiliation of wicked Ahab, so far, as to defer, the execution of these terrible Threatenings which he had denounced by his Prophet 'till the days of his son, (see 1 Kings xxi. 29.) And when Nineveh was threatened with sudden Destruction you find, upon their Fasting, Repentance, and earnest Supplications for Mercy they were spared, and delivered. And that God hath put it into the Heart of our King to appoint such a Day as this, I cannot but look upon as a Token for good, That God still designs Favour unto us; that he will yet spare us, for the sake of the Remnant of his People, that are yet left amongst us; and that he will yet hear their united cries and supplications for Mercy: For the Apostle assures us, ^b *That the effectual fervent Prayer of a righteous Man availeth much.*

And thus I have pointed out to you your present Duty, by shewing you what Effects the apprehension of approaching Judgments ought to have upon us.

And this Head having been of so practical a nature, the less need be offer'd under the Application. However by way of Inference.

^b James v. 16.

1st. We may learn from what has been said, the great evil that there is in Sin; for this alone is the fruitful Mother of every other Evil. This marrs and spoils all our Comforts; turns our Blessings into Curses; exposeth to innumerable Crosses, Losses, and Vexations; yea, it arms Omnipotency itself against the Sinner; opens all the Flood-gates of the Divine Wrath; and at last plungeth the finally Impenitent into endless and intolerable Torment and Misery. 'Tis this alone is the meritorious and procuring Cause of all the Confusions, Wars, Distresses, and Disorders, that affright, afflict, and torment men in this Life; and 'tis this that kindles the Flames of Hell, and is the Author of the everlasting Tortures and Agonies of the Bottomless-Pit. O let us then immediately resolve to have no more to do with this accursed abominable Evil. Hence,

2^{dly}. Let Sinners be assured, that their evil Courses if unpardoned, unrepented of, and finally persisted in, will at last certainly issue in their Ruin and Misery. Sinners may for the present feel little of the direful Effects of Sin, and therefore may go on boldly and securely without Fear or Concern; nevertheless, Evil is certainly before the Sinner; and thy Case is not the less dangerous, because thou wilt not think of it: or vainly flatterest thyself with false Hopes and groundless Expectations: yea, thy Carelessness and
Presumption

Presumption rather declares thy nearness to Destruction. The Evil of Sin will be followed by the Evil of Punishment. O presume therefore no longer on the Divine Patience: for God is now sounding an Alarm against thee in the awful Threatnings of his Word: O listen now to the Sound of these dreadful Thunders, now rolling at a Distance, and in time by Repentance fly from and escape the approaching Storm of Wrath. Let the Wicked therefore now forsake his evil Ways, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him, and to our God, and he will abundantly pardon.

3^{dly}. How infinitely are we indebted to the Lord Jesus Christ for all that he hath done for us! for in his Blood he hath opened for us a Fountain for Sin, and for Uncleannefs; so that herein we may be washed from the guilt of Sin, and obtain Deliverance from that Wrath and Vengeance, to which we were liable on the account of it. Sin had made us the Objects of the Divine Displeasure; and had stopt up all the Avenues of God's Mercy, and Bowels of Compassion; but he opens the way for the free-flowing forth of the Divine Favour; so that God now becomes a reconciled Father to penitent Sinners; admits them as his Children now, and confers upon them an everlasting glorious Inheritance

heritance hereafter. And although he does not see fit to exempt them from temporal Calamities; yea, sometimes visits them with heavy Judgments, and sorely chastiseth them for their Disobedience and Perverseness, yet he corrects them in Measure; his Strokes are but as the Strokes of a tender Father; he puts a Blessing even into the bitter Cup of Affliction; and causeth all Things to work together for their spiritual and eternal Good.

In the last Place, 4^{thly}. Learn from what hath been said, the great happiness and safety of the truly Godly. Their Sins being all pardoned, they have Peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ; therefore they are happy in all Circumstances; are prepared for all Events, and no Evil can befall them but what shall redound to their greater Good and Advantage, they are safe as to their main Concern in the midst of sweeping Judgments, and are prepared to stand even the shock of a dissolving World. Therefore they may adapt the triumphant language of the Psalmist, and say (as in Psal. xlv. 1, 2, 3. and with that I shall conclude,) *God is our Refuge and Strength, a very present Help in Trouble: therefore will we not fear, though the Earth be removed, and though the Mountains be carried into the midst of the Sea; though the Waters thereof roar and be troubled, so that the Mountains shake with the Swelling thereof.*

oes
po-
em
usti-
Per-
tre;
f a
in-
feth
biri-

what
y of
par-
ugh
are
for
but
and
Con-
and
dis-
t the
l fay
hall
b, a
will
ved,
the
ereof
tains